ENTRANCE TO DUNBLANE.

With The Rambler

SETTING out to visit one of the very old, if not, indeed, the oldest, house in the neighborhood of Washington, the Rambler walked through a section of the country long familiar to him, but of which he has not hitherto written. The chief settlement of the neighborhood is Forestville, a village that clusters along, or is scattered along, the Washington and Marlboro road three or four miles southeast of the boundary of the District of Columbia. Like so many other villages, its boundaries are so undefined that a man cannot know just where and when he enters or leaves the settlement. But the point of thickest population of this village is at the intersection of the main road, which leads from Washington to Upper Marlboro, and a road which leads from the stations Berry and Ritchie, on the Chesapeake Beach railroad, to Camp Springs or Redds Corners, on the state road, or the old T. B. road, which leads from Washington by way of Good Hope, Silver Hill and Surrattsville to La Plata and almost any other place in southern Maryland.

Forestville is so called in memory of "the forest," a descriptive phrase which nearly three centuries ago was applied to the wild and unsettled parts of southern Maryland, and which still clings to a section of Prince Georges county east of the District of Columbia, though the primeval forest disappeared from that section of the country two centuries ago.

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The forest character of that region began to disappear at the dawn of the eighteenth century and by the year 1800 was as clear of forest growth and with as large part of its soil under tillage as any other section of Maryland south and east of Washington. Yet the term "The Forest" survives, and the people native to the region and of native descent still speak of their part of the country as "The Forest."

When the pioneers in the second quarter of the seventeenth century made their clearings along the St. Marys river all the land north and east of them was "The Forest." As settlement extended up the Potomac and the Patuxent, and fruitful estates were created out of the wilderness, the forest area grew smaller, but all the wild, tree-grown lands were still "The Forest." In the interior of the country, south of the Eastern branch, west of the Patuxent and east of the Potomac, "The Forest" probably made its last stand. The northern part of the high land forming the watershed between the Potomac and Patuxent rivers and the broken slopes of that watershed, deeply cut by a network of brooks and branches, was the last of southern Maryland to come under cultivation. It was the land farthest from the rivers. These were the great main routes of travel until the coming of roads, and the early roads generally paralleled the rivers except those comparatively short roads which ran down the various "necks."

The early road system of Maryland has been exhaustively dealt with by Dr. Clarence P. Gould, professor of history in the University of Wooster, who undertook a study of the economic history of Maryland while he was associated with Johns Hopkins University, and who was aided in certain ways in this work by Prof. John M. Vincent of Johns Hopkins and Prof. Charles M. Andrews of Yale University. The researches of Dr. Gould were published a few years ago as one of the Johns Hopkins University studies in historical and political science. Dr. Gould wrote that from the main roads there came finally to branch off in every direction a vast number of local roads, public and private, which led down each neck or peninsula between creeks and rivers. These roads formed a network without system or regularity. Their design in the tidewater counties was not to feed into the main arteries, but merely to strike the shortest and best route to the great objective points, the church, the public landing, the county court, and sometimes the mill.

The extension of highways made by the colony during the period between 1720 and 1765 was the source of much of its progress in other ways. No estimate of mileage, says Dr. Gould, is possible, but successive enumerations in the county court records leave no doubt about the rapid opening of new roads. For example, in Queen Anne's county the enumeration of 1730 divided the county into nine overseers' districts, while that of 1758 showed thirty. The significance of these figures is that in 1720 the colony was still a series of scattered settlements spread along the water front with little communication by land, while in 1765 it had become a community every part of which was accessible from every other part.

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In outlining the oldest through cross-country road in Maryland Dr. Gould wrote:

> The most important roads in the province were those forming the main line of travel between Philadelphia and Virginia. This route divided in Delaware and entered Maryland by two branches. One branch ran down the eastern shore. The other branch of the road, from Delaware, reached Annapolis around the head of the bay, running past the head of Elk river to North East, to Susquehanna ferry, near Port Deposit; to Joppa, to Baltimore, thence either across the Patapsco, at Ferry Bar, or around by Elk Ridge and to Annapolis. A little way from Annapolis the road again divided, one branch crossing the Patuxent, at Queen Anne Town, and leading to Upper Marlboro and Addison's ferry, opposite Alexandria, and the other crossing the Patuxent at Nottingham and passing through Piscataway to the main ferry across the Potomac near the mouth of Pope's creek. All these roads were probably in existence by 1720.

The Rambler, though he believes that the Potomac-Patuxent watershed southeast of the District boundary, and which is still called "The Forest," was the last of the lands of southern Maryland to be put under cultivation, knows that the deforestration and tillage of those lands began early in the history of the United States, for considerably before 1694 there was a plantation which covered much of the territory around Forestville. It may be that Forestville is within the boundaries of that old tract. That plantation was called "Good Luck."

In the year mentioned, and for a considerable time before, Good Luck was the plantation and the home of Samuel Magruder and his wife, who was born Sarah Beall. The Rambler has these facts on the authority of Caleb Clarke Magruder, jr., of Upper Marlboro, than whom is no more reliable authority. Mr. Magruder, in a paper on "John Magruder of Dunblane," published in the 1912 proceedings of the American Clan Gregor Society, said:

> John Magruder, popularly known as John Magruder of Dunblane, was the son of Samuel Magruder and Sarah Beall and grandson of Alexander Magruder, Maryland immigrant, and, according to tradition, Margaret Braithwaite. He was born in 1694 on his father's dwelling-plantation known as "Good Luck," Calvert county, Maryland, near the Long Old Fields of revolutionary days, now Forestville, Prince Georges county, Md.

A friend of the Rambler, F. W. Besley, wrote a few years ago an official report on the forests and forestry resources of Prince Georges county, and his report was published by the Maryland geological survey. Mr. Besley does not agree with nor confirm the Rambler's theory that "The Forest" of Maryland made its last stand in the region of Forestville on that high land just east of the District. Mr. Besley wrote that in the early history of the county the forests constituted by far the larger part of the land area, and that, owing to the demand for tillable land, the forests were rapidly reduced, until practically all of the arable land was cleared for the growing of crops. An extract from Mr. Besley's paper follows:

> Naturally, along the Patuxent river (where the tide of immigration first set in) the greatest inroads were made on the forested area, until this section, known in the early settlement days as the "Forests of Prince Georges," has now the smallest percentage of forest land of any part of the county. For the last twenty years there has been little change. The land that was cleared prior to that time is being cultivated, and the chances are that there will be little change in the woodland area for a long time to come. In the western part of the county the conditions are quite different. The soils of this section are more diversified and on the whole less adaptable to the growing of crops. There are large areas of poorly drained land, also sterile sand and clay soils where pine and oaks will thrive. Most of this land was brought under cultivation prior to 1860 for the growing of corn and tobacco. Under these exacting crops, however, much of the land became exhausted and was allowed to grow up in brush. As a rule, the land that grew oaks, poplar and hardwoods was of better quality than that on which pine was found and hence it was the hardwood land that was first cleared. As soon as any of this land was allowed to go uncultivated it was seeded in a few years by the light-winged seed from the neighboring pine trees, and thus added to the ever-increasing pine areas. It is estimated that 5,000 acres of old fields have grown up to pine during the past twelve years.

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In the matter of the forests of Maryland it is worth noting that many of the early chroniclers comment on the timber of the province, and especially on the size and variety of the trees and the freedom of the woods from shrub-by undergrowth, many writers mentioning the fact that a man could ride a horse comfortably through the woods. There is an early document styled, "An Account of the Colony of the Lord Baron of Baltimore, 1633," which now lies before the Rambler. Clayton Colman Hall of the Maryland Historical Society, editor of the "Narrative of Early Maryland, 1633-1684," says that that account of Lord Baltimore's colony is a translation from the Latin original transcribed about the year 1832 by the late Father William McSherry, S. J., from the archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

The Latin text of Father McSherry's copy, together with an English translation, was published by the Maryland Historical Society in 1874. In 1898 this text was compared with the record in the Jesuit archives by Father Thomas Hughes, S. J., and several minor corrections noted. "The original document," says Mr. Hall, "was prepared some months before the departure of the first colonists, and in anticipation of that event, and was written by Father Andrew White, S. J. It was transmitted by him directly, or through the provincial in England to the general of the Society at Rome, the Very Rev. Father Mucio Vitelleschi, for the better information of the latter as to the nature of the new field in which the writer was to be engaged. The sources from which the facts were derived are stated in the document itself. George, the first Lord Baltimore and father of Cecilius, the first proprietor of Maryland, was in fact an eyewitness, as he had explored the country upon the occasion of his visit to Virginia in 1629-30 after recognizing the unpromising condition of his projected colony at Avalon, Newfoundland." Father White wrote:

> On the plains and in the open fields there is a great abundance of grass, but the country is for the most part thickly wooded. There are a great many hickory trees and oaks so straight and tall that beams, sixty feet long and two and a half feet wide, can be made of them. The cypress trees also grow to a height of eighty feet before they have any branches and three men with arms extended can barely reach round their trunks. There are plenty of mulberry trees to feed silk worms. There are alder, ash and chestnut trees, as large as those which grow in Spain, Italy and France and cedars equaling those which Libanus boasts of.
>
> Why should I speak o' the pine, laurel, fir, sassafras and the other trees, with various kinds besides which yield balsam and fragrant gums? Trees useful in every way, for building, shipbuilding, for making planks, pitch, tar, turpentine, sineqma, perfumes and plasters. The woods moreover are passable, not filled with thorns or undergrowth, but arranged by nature for pasture for animals, and for affording pleasure to man. There are fruitful vines, from which wine can be made, and a grape as large as cherries, the juice of which is thick and oily. The inhabitants call these mesamines. There are cherries as big as damsons and gooseberries just like ours. There are three kinds of plums. Mulberries, chestnuts and walnuts, are so plentiful that they are used in various ways for food.

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The Rambler's route through this old-settled and otherwise interesting section lay in those two minor civil divisions of the county of Prince Georges called Pauldings district and Mellwood district. Following the well traveled road from Ritchie to Forestville, one soon mounts to the high and generally level land which constitutes the topographic backbone of the country. Much of the region is divided into small farms, and a traveler is never out of sight of a house, and usually a number of them are in view. Some are so closely distributed along the road and in the abutting fields that one is prompted to ask the name of the settlement. Once when the Rambler asked the question the answer was: "It is just a place and hasn't got any name." After passing about half miles you come to the northerly fringe of Forestville. The road branches to the right and the left, both branches intersecting a little further along the Washington and Marlboro pike. Once that was a very hard road to travel; a few years ago it was a poor road, but now it is one of the fine and modern automobile roads of the country around Washington.

On the left hand, and close to the point where the road from Ritchie branches, stands a little church. Morning service was in progress and the music of many voices singing hymns came to the Rambler. Around the church are many graves, a number of them, perhaps, much the greater number of them, unmarked. On the tombs were carved many of the familiar names of county families and the Rambler jotted down these:

> Alvira, wife of Maj. Alger, died March 16, 1853; Zala Martin, died January 2, 1858; children of H. E. and L. M. Nichols, 1857; Almira E., wife of Edward H. Nye, died 1860; Edward H. Nye, 1824-1865; James P. Armstrong, 1829-1892; Jennie Harbin, 1896; Ann Bayne, 1895; Charles Harbin, died 1913, aged seventy years; Eliza Warner, died 1851; Noah Smith, died 1906, aged seventy-nine years; Emma Smith, his wife, 1894; Elizabeth Ringen, wife of Frederick Ringen, 1876; Lucy L. Rollins, wife of R. H. Rollins, 1904.

Down the right branch of the road the Rambler saw another church with an acre of tombs around it and a score of automobiles and several horses and buggies parked and hitched about it. But the Rambler, taking the left fork, soon entered the main pike and continued on his way. Half a mile eastward on the pike one passes a big frame building, on the front of which a black sign lettered in gold tells this: "Forest Lodge, No. 41, I. O. O. F. Mizpah (Rebecca), No. 36, 1913." In a field nearby are tournament arches left over from last summer and which no doubt will be a rallying place for chivalry and beauty this summer. Close at hand is a blacksmith shop, surrounded with a clutter of wheels without wagon bodies and of wagon bodies without wheels. There a dirt road strikes off to the left and along it the Rambler headed.

It must have been about two miles along this road that the Rambler came to the brow of a gentle hill and off the road stood the house for which the traveler was looking. Its walls were white, partly of brick covered with cement, and partly of timber. Four white chimneys rose above the high roof which sloped down in front to the top of the first story, and which had a longer though not so steep a slope at the rear. A lane of maples, recently cut back, led to the house, and a few yards in the rear of the house stood ranks of upright tombstones with two tall old cedars standing guard over them.

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The house and estate bear the name Dunblane. The name is compounded of the Scottish words "dun," meaning hill, and "Blane," after the saint of that name who in the seventh century erected a cathedral, the ruin of which still stands in the city of Dunblane, Perthshire, Scotland. Alexander Magruder, immigrant to Maryland about 1650, came from Perthshire and acquired many tracts of land in the province of Maryland by patent and private purchase. One tract was surveyed for him in 1671, and he named it "Dunblane." This tract, with others, passed to one of his sons, Samuel, and in 1711 the Dunblane tract passed to Samuel's son, John. This John Magruder, on December 15, 1715, took as his wife Savana or Susanna Smith, the marriage being celebrated in St. Barnabas' Church, Queen Anne parish. In that year John and his wife took up their residence on the Dunblane tract, and it is assumed that he was the builder of the old house which stands there today. Certain it is that this house is the one dwelt in by John Magruder in 1715. John lived there until his death in 1750. He left Dunblane to his widow, with the provision that at her death it should go to his son Nathaniel. In 1776 Dunblane came into possession of Nathaniel's son Francis, and he, dying in 1819, left it to his daughters, Louisa, Eleanor W. and Elizabeth Magruder. Louisa died in 1828, Elizabeth died in 1827, and the property remained with Eleanor W. until her death in 1847. She devised Dunblane to her cousin, Eliza Hamilton, wife of Dr. Charles B. Hamilton.

Dr. and Mrs. Hamilton sold to George W. Watterston of Louisiana in 1849, and at his death in 1860 it descended to his son, David A. Watterston of Washington city. He died in 1903, and in 1904 it was bought from the trustee of the Watterston estate by William T. Beall of Rufus, who occupies the house and farms the fields of Dunblane today. When the Rambler passed that way and made a short halt at old Dunblane, Mr. Beall, his wife and two daughters were at church at Forestville, and the Rambler, still having a long road before him, pressed on without seeing the present occupants of the historic place.

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In the burial ground of Dunblane are monuments to Francis Magruder, who died July 9, 1819, in the fifty-sixth year of his age; Mrs. Barbara Magruder, wife of Francis Magruder, who died June 25, 1812, aged forty-eight; Louisa Magruder, who died December 12, 1828; Eleanor W. Magruder, who died February 5, 1847, aged fifty-six; Mrs. Sarah Shanley, who died in September, 1810, aged forty-five; Elizabeth Magruder, who died in June, 1827, aged fifty-two years; John Smith Magruder, who died April 7, 1825; Eleanor Magruder, who died in 1852, aged eighty-seven; Roderick M. McGregor, who died September 1, 1857, aged fifty-four; Henry McGregor, who died in 1851, aged forty-four; and Rose and Virginia, daughters of N. M. and S. E. McGregor. There is also a monument "Sacred to the memory of Margaret Magruder, erected by her niece, Eliza Hamilton."

There is no doubt that John Magruder, builder of Dunblane house, and his wife, and his son Nathaniel and his wife, are also buried in this holy acre, but their tombstones have disappeared.

The Rambler told in his narrative last week of the American Clan Gregor Society, in the membership of which are hundreds of the descendants of Alexander Magruder and the Maryland immigrant.

Among the Washingtonians of Magruder ancestry who are identified with the Clan Gregor Society are the following:

Mrs. Dorothy Edmonston Allen, Miss Maria Forrest Bailey, Mrs. Agnes Woods Bowie, George Calvert Bowie, John Francis MacGregor Bowie, Richard Somervell Bowie, Leroy Stafford Boyd, Mrs. Mary Sophronia Brooks, Mrs. Mattie Lou Cobb, Miss Norma Cobb, William Newman Dorset, Mrs. Roberta Hoxton Dorset, Miss Susie Mitchel Dorset, Miss Fannie Ashlie Ferneyhough, Mrs. Helen Woods Gantt, Miss Helen Woods MacGregor Gantt, Miss Jessie Waring Gantt, Miss Dorothy Katherine Golladay, Mrs. Rose Virginia Golladay, Mrs. Kate Kearney Henry, Capt. Hilary Pollard Jones, jr.; Miss Nannie Bowie MacGregor, Miss Rebecca Mason MacGregor, Miss Rose Lee MacGregor, Mrs. Evelyn Bowie Mackall, Miss Elizabeth Cummings Magruder, Herbert Staley Magruder, Miss Margaret Magruder, Mrs. Margaret Jane Magruder, Miss Mary Blanche Magruder, Oliver Barron Magruder, Oliver Graham Magruder, Mrs. Rosalind Geddes Magruder, Thomas Pickett Magruder, U. S. N.; Mrs. Susie Mitchel McCall, Donald Fitz Randolph MacGregor, Alexander Muncaster, Miss Edna Sarah Muncaster, Miss Margaret Carter Muncaster, Dr. Stewart Brown Muncaster, Mrs. Eugenia Farr Rees, Mrs. Ann Wade Sheriff, Clement William Sheriff, Mrs. Walter Ann McCormick Sheriff, Mrs. Isabel Geddes Smith, Mrs. Mary Ellinor Steed, Mrs. Sarah Goldsborough Magruder Stevens, Mrs. Mary Spriggs Belt Wade, Miss Ruth Elizabeth Wade and Dr. Walter Augustine Wells.

This is not a complete list, but was taken by the Rambler from the latest data available to him.

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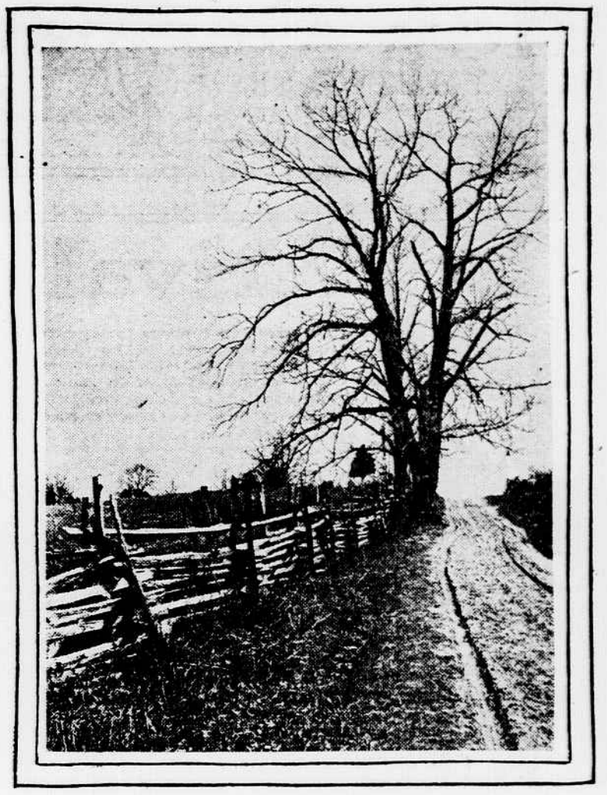
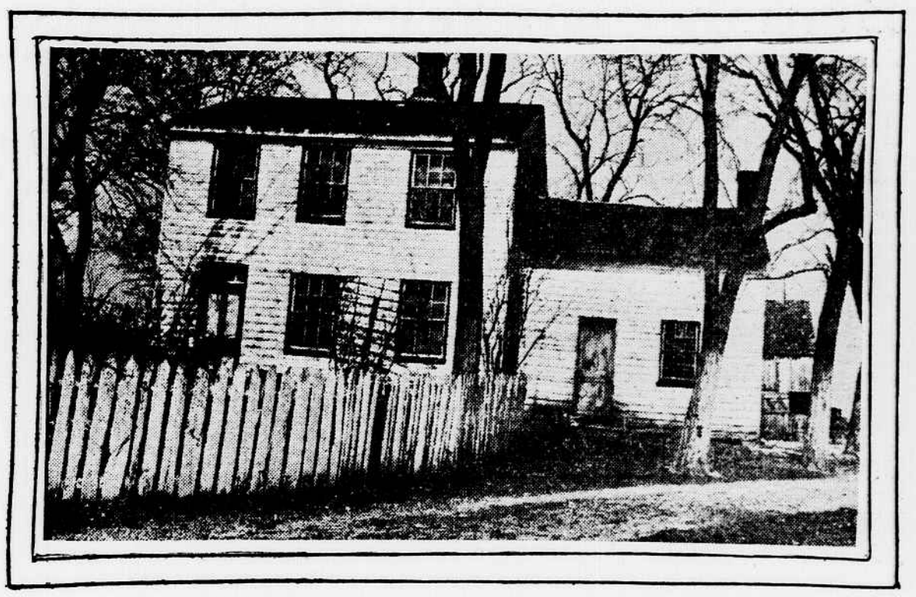
Among the Magruder descendants living near Washington and who are identified with the Clan Gregor Society are:

Mrs. Margaret Beall Dorset, Olney, Montgomery county; Mrs. Helen Magruder Bethel, Vienna, Va.; John Spencer Bukey, Vienna, Va.; Mrs. Robert Julia Bukey, Vienna; Mrs. Helen Gassaway, Miss Helen Muncaster Gassaway and Miss Rosalie Hunson Gassaway of Rockville, Edward Leonidas Green, Rockville; Mrs. Adelaide Stonestreet Green, Rockville; Miss Mary Anne Griffin, Miss Caroline Hill Griffin, Miss Ebener Bryan Griffin, Miss Elizabeth Marshall Lou Cobb, Miss Norma Cobb, William Newman Griffin, Miss Frances Fenwick Griffin, Mrs. Mary Edelweiss Marshall Griffin and Robert Bryan Griffin of Vienna, Va.; Mrs. Laura Cook Higgins and Miss Laura Magruder Higgins of Rockville, Miss Fredericka Dean Hill and Miss Henrietta Sophia May Hill of Upper Marlboro, Miss Mary Allee Hill, Miss Mary Therese Hill and William M. Hill of Landover, William Skinner Hill of Upper Marlboro, Col. Spencer Cone Jones, Rockville; Mrs. Ella Magruder Linthicum, Rockville; Miss Elizabeth MacGregor and Miss Ellen Ewell MacGregor of Forestville, Miss Sarah Louise MacGregor, Forestville; Caleb Clarke Magruder, jr., Upper Marlboro; Edward Magruder, Beltsville; Dr. Ernest Pendleton Magruder and Ernest Pendleton Magruder, jr., Glendale; Miss Jane Beall Magruder, Beltsville; Mrs. Martha Lumsden Magruder, Rockville; Miss Mary Magruder, Sandy Spring; Miss Mary Teresa Magruder, Beltsville; Mrs. Maryel Elgan Magruder, Glendale; Mercer Hampton Magruder, Upper Marlboro; Russell Magruder, Beltsville; Miss Sarah Cummins Magruder, Beltsville; Dr. William Edward Magruder, Sandy Spring; Mrs. Martha Willson Mannar, Rockville; Mrs. Caroline Hill Marshall, Vienna; Prof. Henry Barnett McDonald and Mrs. Julia Magruder McDonnell, College Park; Mrs. Alletta Magruder Muncaster, Rockville; John Edwin Muncaster, Rockville; William Edward Muncaster, Rockville; Henry Hall Olmstead, Indian Head; Miss Eugenia Hilleary Osbourn, Manassas; George Peter, Mrs. Laura Magruder Peter and Thomas Alan MacGregor Peter, Kensington; Mrs. Mary Cranford Powell, Alexandria; Miss Alice Talbott, Washington Grove; Miss Rebecca Thomas Veirs, Rockville; Mrs. Mary Emma Waters, Thomas Clifford Waters and Thomas Worthington Waters, Olney; Mrs. Mary Magruder Willard, Poolesville; Miss Elinor MacGregor Wood, Mrs. Grace MacGregor Wood and Miss Roberta Wood, Forestville, and Miss Elizabeth Klazar Woolf, Beltsville.



ON THE ROAD TO DUNBLANE.

DUNBLANE, BUILT BY JOHN MAGRUDER IN 1715.



CHARACTERISTIC FARMHOUSE IN "THE FOREST" OF MARYLAND.

Former Household Servant Placed at Head of the Army of Great Britain

CAREER of Gen. Sir William Robertson, Son of an Agricultural Laborer, Who Began Life as a Domestic Servant and Is Now Sure of Elevation to the Peerage. Served Ten Years in Ranks Before He Won His Commission—First Case of Kind in English History.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, March 23, 1916.

FROM servant to head of the thinking machine of the British army in the greatest war in history, with the sure prospect of a peerage at the end of the war, if not before. This is the record of Gen. Sir William Robertson, who was recently appointed chief of the general staff at the war office in London, and virtual commander-in-chief of the British armies. Since his appointment he has taken over several of the duties formerly performed by Lord Kitchener, thus leaving his great chief freer to devote his time to the work more properly belonging to the province of the civilian minister of war, for that is the post which Kitchener, although the greatest soldier of his day, is occupying at present.

Robertson's rise to the very highest possible position in the British army is unique. There is no case on record of a ranker attaining the highest command in the British army, and only one other case in which a ranker came within even measurable distance of it. Private soldiers, it is true, have obtained commissions before the great war, and in this war hundreds of them have been promoted to commissioned rank, but in the old days few of them ever got farther than the rank of major.

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Most of these, too, were what is known as "gentleman rankers," young men of good family who had not either the money or the ability to go through the military college at Sandhurst, and who enlisted in the ranks with the express intention of winning a commission. Commanding officers looked kindly on these men, and it was much easier for them to win their way up than for the genuine enlisted man, no matter how clever or how good a soldier he might be.

The only other case at all comparable with Robertson's is that of Gen. Sir Hector MacDonald, the soldier who literally fought his way up from the ranks to a generalship and who was admittedly one of the most brilliant soldiers of his time. MacDonald might have gone as far as Robertson had he lived, but it will be remembered he committed suicide in Paris, while on his way home from Ceylon to face the court-martial. The story goes that his friends met him in his Paris hotel, laid a revolver on the table and left the room, this being a hint that there was only one way out for him. However that may be, it seems to be pretty well established that Hector MacDonald was found dead in bed the next morning, although to this day there are thousands of people who declare that there was no corpse in the bed, and that the coffin which was brought home to England a day or two later contained nothing but lead. These people believe that MacDonald chose to disappear and from time to time he has been identified in various forms by believers in the disappearance myth. During the Russo-Japanese war there were many people who were ready to swear that Gen. Nogi was MacDonald in disguise. He was "discovered" also on the Russian side in this war, and later he was said to be reorganizing the Chinese army. The MacDonald partisans even have affected to find him in the present war on several occasions, forgetful of the fact that he would now, if alive, be almost past active command.

Robertson is a genuine ranker. He is the son of a farm laborer in Lincolnshire, where he was born fifty-five years ago, and his preliminary education was received at the village school. When he left school he worked in the fields for a time, and then he had a great stroke of luck for one of such humble origin. He was received into one of the great houses in the neighborhood as a servant. At eighteen the military fever seized him. He chose a crack regiment, the 16th Lancers, and he must have made an ideal cavalryman, for even now he is the beau ideal of a dashing soldier, tall, well set up and with an extraordinarily firm chin and jaw. He had no one to help him along, and he served in the ranks for ten years, but before long his ambition was roused and he probably foresaw that in his case the soldier's knapsack really did contain the field marshal's baton. He began then the study of languages and of military history, both of which have stood him in such good stead in his subsequent career.

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It is not necessarily surprising that this laborer's son should be esteemed the possessor of the most brilliant brain in the British army, for brains are not inherited, but it is surprising that with his lack of educational advantages he should be one of the most brilliant linguists. His French, in fact, is said to be better than his English, for, in spite of his long association with men whose early opportunities were better, his English still smacks of the soil and the barrack room, and possesses a fullness and flavor that rather endear him to the private soldier, and make him the terror of the shirker and incompetent among his officers, for Robertson's is not the temper that suffers fools gladly.

Robertson's French is the purest French of the Academie, and French officers who confer with him always come away exclaiming on its excellence and wondering where such a typical Briton acquired an accent of such purity. He also speaks German with easy fluency, and has a good working knowledge of Russian and Italian, while there is hardly one of the scores of Indian dialects in which he cannot make himself understood, while in many of them he speaks like a native. When he was chief of staff to Sir John French in France during the earlier stages of the war he used to delight in visiting the Indian lines and talking familiarly with the sepoys and troopers about their homes.

After his ten years' service in the 16th Lancers, now known as "King Alfonso's Own," Robertson received his first commission as second lieutenant in the 3d Dragoon Guards and was sent to India. He chose the Indian service wisely, knowing that he could not live on his pay in crack regiments at home, and, moreover, at that time India was the place for a young officer who intended to work and make a career.

It was in India that he saw his first fighting, in the Chitral campaign, and it was in this campaign that his career nearly came to an end. He was then Lieut. Robertson, and he was out on a reconnaissance. Requiring a sketch of the enemy's position he handed his sword to a native guide and crawled forward. Suddenly the guide fired on him with a double-barreled sporting rifle, the charge from one barrel passing through one sleeve of his tunic and the charge from the other barrel passing through the other sleeve, but without scratching him. Robertson dashed for the man, firing with his revolver, but the revolver jammed and he threw it away and grappled with the traitor and choked him into insensibility, but not before he was cut over the head with his own sword. Two more native guides made a rush for him, but before they could reach him his Ghurka guard arrived and rescued him.

HEAD OF THE THINKING MACHINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY.
Sir William Robertson, new chief of staff, and virtual commander-in-chief under Lord Kitchener.

(Photo by Underwood & Underwood.)

* * *

He won the distinguished service order in this campaign and definitely attracted the attention of his superiors, chief among whom was the late Lord Roberts, who formed a very high opinion of Robertson's ability. When the South African war broke out it found Robertson a captain, but his ability as a linguist and strategist had been recognized by this time and he was made an intelligence officer at headquarters. He came out of that war a colonel, and then he did a most amazing thing for a ranker officer, or, indeed, for any officer of his seniority. He secured permission to attend the Staff College at Camberley, in order that he might obtain the magic letters "P. S. C." (passed Staff College) after his name, and the right to wear the red collar tabs which indicate this distinction.

Of course, he passed brilliantly, for there was little of the art of war that the Staff College professors could teach him, and most surprising thing of all, he, a ranker, a graduate of the village school, was appointed director of the Staff College in 1910. While he was there he insisted on a close study of the various continental army systems, and there is little doubt that whatever success the British have achieved so far in this war is due in large part to the educational system for staff officers instituted by this ex-private soldier, at Britain's chief military training school.

By this time he was a major general, and in 1914 he became a lieutenant general. He became a full general last year, and he is probably next on the list for promotion to the rank of field marshal. In his present position, however, his name is signed to the orders which all the field marshals in the army, except Kitchener himself, must obey.

Like most men of his type, Robertson is a glutton for work, and hardly knows what fatigue means. He is also a master of detail. When he was quartermaster general to Sir John French, at the Aldershot command, in the two or three years before the war began, he made himself familiar with every detail of provisioning, clothing and generally catering for the army. He introduced a lot of reforms, one being what is known as the "iron ration," the little package of condensed food which each man must carry with him, and which he must not touch until the last extremity.

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What he learned then stood the army in good stead in the early days of the fighting in France and Flanders. Never once during the terrible retreat from Mons, and later during the pursuit of the Germans to the present line did the British army go short of food or supplies. Robertson, who was chief of staff to Sir John French, cut all the red tape and got the goods to the places where they were wanted. On one occasion a trainload of food arrived at a French port and was badly needed at the front. For some reason the transport officer said it could not be loaded and dispatched that night. Robertson heard of the delay, as he heard of everything, and motored to the wharf.

"I am going to stay here until that train leaves," he told the officer in charge, "and if I miss my supper you—well—go back to England." Robertson did not miss his supper, and the Tommies at the front got theirs in time.

It is said that he has no nerves. He can work all day and all night for days on a stretch, and he expects all those around him to do the same. A man who is not in the pink of physical and mental condition cannot remain on his staff. Off duty, however, his friends declare that he is a kindly, if rather bluff, man.

No man is more ready to cut red tape when he thinks it is clogging the wheels of efficiency, although no man is more rigid in his advocacy of system in the business of army administration. One of the most quoted instances of this was on the retreat from Mons, when officers and men lost caps, overcoats, rifles and equipment of all kinds. Now the British army regulations do not provide for hurried retreats and they do provide that a man cannot draw any fresh article of equipment until the old article has been handed in, solemnly sat on by a board and condemned as past further use. Officers are supposed to provide their own equipment out of their pay.

When thousands of men arrived at the base, half clad and without all sorts of essential articles, no one seemed to know what to do about it. Robertson cut the red tape by ordering the storekeepers to issue to every man what he needed, taking, of course, an officer's receipt, and let it be accounted for afterward. Presumably, a board has sat and condemned the lost equipment in order to keep the records straight, but if it has no one outside the army has heard of it.

Perhaps one of Robertson's greatest achievements was his marriage. The ex-ranker married the daughter of a general. In 1894, while he was still a captain in India, he married Mildred Adelaide, daughter of Lieut. Gen. Palin of the Indian army. No doubt at the time there was gossip in every cantonment in India—the home of gossip—about Capt. Robertson's step up in the world. Now he is the superior in rank of his father-in-law, and his wife is Lady Robertson, for the king knighted her husband in 1913 after the great maneuvers of that year at Aldershot. It is no secret that before long he will receive a barony and perhaps even a viscounty.

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Before Verdun.

"THE Verdun battle has ended a very long period of inaction," said Col. Don Nicolas y Cereijo, the Spanish military attache, at a reception last month.

"The inaction was, in fact, so marked that an English officer, talking to me while over here on brief leave, said:

"'Oh, yes, we were quite comfy in our winter quarters—jolly fine trenches, good funk holes, quiet Germans. We'd been told that there were only the caretaker and his wife in the German trench opposite ours. He fired the shots while she sent up the flares.

"'We used to get so fed up with doing nothing,' the English officer continued, 'that we'd organize every Friday a cleaning fatigue. We'd take down all our sandbags and give them a thorough dusting, and sections of our men, armed with the very latest and most potent polishes, would go out and polish up the long lines of wire entanglements till they shone like virgin silver in the winter sun.'

"Of course," ended Col. Cereijo, "the Verdun offensive ended all that kind of joking talk."